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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1276
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001666

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2017

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SUBJECT: MALIKI SAYS NEIGHBORS AND JAM ARE SERIOUS THREATS

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/REL MNF-I) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki told General Petraeus and the Ambassador May 17 that he was frustrated with his neighbors' continued treachery against him and Iraq. Maliki also expressed distress over Jaysh al-Mahdi and said he intended to act more aggressively against them in Sadr City and in southern provinces. Maliki lamented that increasing security of places like Karbala may not be possible given the insufficient level of forces and equipment, a causality rejected by Petraeus. Maliki also questioned his military's ability to take on Al Qaeda since so many MOD officials were Baath'ists working with this enemy. Maliki agreed to review Petraeus' proposal to incorporate locally recruited men from Abu Ghuraib into the Iraqi security forces and to work with MNF-I and Ministry of Justice to address the surging detention population. END SUMMARY.

The Neighbors: They Are Against Me, Not With Me

¶2. (C/REL MNF-I) Prime Minister Maliki told General Petraeus and the Ambassador that Iraq's neighbors were conspiring to unseat him and destroy his country. While these nations' leaders publicly state their goodwill toward Iraq, Maliki said, they denounce him as a sectarian leader and finance his country's enemies in an attempt to foment civil war. He added that his neighbors were also trying to undermine his government by supporting Iraqi political figures such as Salih al-Mutlak and Ayad Alawi. General Petraeus said the USG understood his concern and was enjoining diplomatically the neighbors, such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, to address them. He cited Vice President Cheney's recent visit to the region as an example of our efforts. Petraeus stressed to Maliki that Iran was a particularly nefarious actor, using its intelligence agencies to support both Sunni and Shia militia activities in Iraq.

Taking on JAM in a new bold way

¶3. (C/REL MNF-I) Maliki started the meeting by stating that he had "blown all bridges with those who will not go along with Fardh al Qanoon" and told the Shia that they must now stand for Iraq. Upset about recent JAM shelling of the IZ and actions in An Nasiriyah, Maliki said he was ready to take more aggressive action against Jaysh al-Mahdi in both Sadr City and the southern provinces. In a recent conversation with Minister of Interior Bulani, Maliki said Bulani proposed surrounding Sadr City with additional Iraqi police, emergency reaction units, and Special Forces. This force would be used to launch a large attack; arresting and killing JAM members, confiscating unauthorized weapons, and seizing the "hundreds of government vehicles" that JAM uses to carry out their

terrorism. Petraeus cautioned against such an approach saying it was unrealistic given the limited number of troops in Baghdad. He said it would take an enormous force, heavy fighting, and many weeks to clear out Sadr city, noting it took 19 days to go through Mansoor, a neighborhood much smaller than Sadr City. Petraeus recommended, instead, focusing on targeting the secret cell leaders and, at some point, a few of the worst Sadr City neighborhoods while continuing joint action in the currently targeted areas surrounding Sadr City.

Southern instability keeps me awake at night

¶4. (C/REL MNF-I) In terms of the southern provinces, Maliki said he wanted to increase operations against JAM and other enemy forces in Dhi Qar, Basra, and Karbala. He said the security situation in these provinces was intolerable. He so feared an attack against the Karbala holy shrine that he was not sleeping at night. Petraeus recommended Maliki contact the provincial political and security authorities and order them unequivocally to improve protection in the region. Maliki said he had discussed his concerns with the Ministers of Defense and Interior, local politicians, police chiefs and area army commanders but they said the lack of weaponry and trained forces hindered their abilities to take on the enemy.

Again, it's really about the lack of forces and weaponry

¶5. (C/REL MNF-I) Maliki said in order to increase security operations against JAM and other enemies he needed more Iraqi security forces and weaponry, especially AK-47s. Petraeus rejected this assessment, countering that what the ISF really

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needed were better leaders and more courage. Petraeus questioned the need for rifles, pointing out that in the past three years, MNF-I had distributed over 350,000 AK-47s to the ISF. Petraeus said that this contribution was in addition to the thousands of AK-47s that the Iraqis had purchased with their own funds, adding that some of these were probably still in Iraqi warehouses. (Comment: Petraeus checked on the availability of weapons in Iraqi warehouses and found tens of thousands of AK-47s and 40 million rounds of AK-47 ammo that Maliki could use if he chooses to, and he conveyed that to Maliki.) Petraeus told Maliki that if he still felt Iraqi security forces need additional weapons he should direct his security ministers to use their own budgets to make additional purchases.

That Baath'ist Ministry of Defense

¶6. (C/REL MNF-I) Maliki complained that another major hindrance to success was the high level of sectarianism within the security forces, particularly in the Ministry of Defense. According to Maliki, the MOD is riddled with Baath'ists who cooperate with Al Qaeda. General Petraeus cautioned that loyalty problems were not limited to Sunnis, and Shi'a-led sectarianism appeared to be more of a problem within the Shia-dominated Ministry of Interior.

But how about that Shia-militia Ministry of Interior?

¶7. (C/REL MNF-I) Petraeus cited MOI's Major General Mehdi Sabih Hashim al-Gharaqqi and Adnan al-Assadi as sectarian actors involved in militia activities and attacks on Sunnis. Petraeus said that despite the evidence he has provided to Maliki and other Iraqi leaders, these men remain in power. Maliki responded that he planned to get rid of Mehdi "when the time is right" and that his assistant Major General Rashid Flayyah Mohammed al-Halifi was worse than Mehdi. As for Assadi participating in wrongdoing, Maliki said "it's impossible." Petraeus complained that bad guys such as this

were kept in power while effective leaders such as Major General Bashar Mahmoud al-Youb, a Sunni and the former ninth division commander, were dismissed by the Prime Minister on unfounded charges of coup plotting.

Iraqi Army and local force: Can't they just get along

18. (C/REL MNF-I) Petraeus requested Maliki to tell the Iraqi Army Commander in Abu Gharaib, Brigadier General Nasir Ahmad Ghanim Daoud al Hayti to stop "picking fights" with the Coalition's locally recruited security force operating in the area. Petraeus said this local force, known as an Emergency Response Unit was comprised of men willing to fight Al Qaeda and should be supported by the Iraqi army, not criticized, sidelined, or arrested. Maliki praised BG Nasir's overall performance and questioned the legitimacy of the ERU. He said that neither he nor BG Nasir could support what appeared to be militia. Petraeus said the engagement of tribes was critical to the fight and offered to brief Maliki on the Coalition's plan to integrate the ERU into the formal security force structure. (NOTE: Maliki and Defense Minister Abd al-Qadir have frequently registered their opposition to the Coalition-created ERUs that were established in the west. Both argue these ERUs are nothing more than Sunni militias. END NOTE.)

Detainee population crisis: more beds, more guards needed

19. (C/REL MNF-I) Maliki agreed with Petraeus' assessment that the surge in ISF detainee population needed immediate attention. Petraeus pointed out his grave concern with detainee conditions and the lack of trained Iraqi Corrections Service guards. Maliki said he was scheduled to meet with Iraqi Chief Judge Medhat al Mahmood and Ministry of Justice personnel in the coming days to develop a plan to speed up the investigations and trials, if necessary, of detainees in Baghdad. Petraeus recommended Maliki also direct the Ministry of Justice to spend its budget on the employment and training of more prison guards, noting that the Rule of Law Green Zone and the al Baladiyah prisons could not fill their cells without trained guards. Petraeus said that \$10 billion was not spent last year by the Government of Iraq and so they should be able to find the funds to pay for 5000 corrections officers.

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